United Nations A/C.3/71/7

General Assembly

Distr.: General
29 November 2016

Original: English

Seventy-first session
Third Committee
Agenda items 27 and 68

Advancement of women

Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 22 November 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Chile and Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit to you the joint Call for Action to Reduce the Cost of Violence against Women, by the President of the Republic of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, and the President of the Republic of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė. This joint Call for Action was drawn up on the basis of the high-level discussion on the economic cost of violence against women, which took place on 21 September 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

We would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 27 and 68.

(*Signed*) Cristian **Barros**
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Chile to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Raimonda **Murmokaitė**
Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Lithuania to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 22 November 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Chile and Lithuania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Call for Action to Reduce the Cost of Violence against Women

Expressing grave concern that one in three women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetimes and that domestic and intimate partner violence causes more deaths than homicides or civil wars, and stressing that, in addition to being a grave human rights violation and one of the worst forms of discrimination, violence against women is also a serious drain on economic resources,

Emphasizing that the cost of violence against women could amount to around 2 per cent of gross domestic product,

Recognizing that violence against women occurs in every country, rich or poor, developed or developing, in times of conflict or in peacetime, and in both the public and private spheres,

Affirming that the direct costs of violence against women, such as expenses for the health system, counselling, the justice system, and child and welfare support, are only part of what societies pay for violence against women, because violence also has indirect costs, such as lost wages, productivity and potential, as well as long-term psychological effects,

Underlining that violence against women is a serious obstacle to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, in particular, reaching Sustainable Development Goal 5, which is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls,

Noting with concern that the response to violence against women to date has focused primarily on intervening after the violence has occurred, and stressing that greater resources should be dedicated to timely prevention and addressing the root causes, such as gender inequality, discrimination and gender stereotypes,

Underscoring that establishing the cost of violence against women is a powerful tool for advocacy and action aimed at supporting women, preventing abuse and ensuring the accountability of perpetrators,

Having brought together a group of Heads of State and international organizations as well as distinguished experts at the high-level discussion on the economic cost of violence against women, which took place on 21 September 2016 at United Nations Headquarters in New York,

We urgently call for:

1. Redoubling efforts to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women, including femicide (gender-related killing of women and girls), which impede the full achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and have an enormous negative economic impact on women, their families and entire societies, as well as on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in particular

Sustainable Development Goal 5, as well as other targets on health and well-being, quality education, decent work and economic growth;

2. Recognizing that establishing the economic cost of violence against women is yet another compelling argument for drawing attention to and taking action against this grave violation of human rights and should be used as a tool to bridge the gap between declarations and real actions on the ground aimed at reducing and eliminating violence against women;

3. Emphasizing that the high cost of violence against women should under no circumstances become a justification to reduce resources but should serve as a catalyst to increase spending that would contribute to its effective elimination;

4. Strengthening the focus on preventing violence against women, and recognizing that establishing the cost of such violence is instrumental in exposing the cost of inaction;

5. Conducting national and regional studies that estimate the cost of violence against women to the respective economies and encouraging States to use the results of such surveys to adopt, fine-tune and monitor the implementation of relevant legislation and policies;

6. Ensuring that comprehensive, comparable and high-quality statistical data are available globally to demonstrate the magnitude and scope of the damage caused to individuals, families and societies;

7. Improving the sharing and adoption of good practices, at the local, national, regional and international levels, aimed at combating violence against women;

8. Stepping up the efforts of all stakeholders, including national Governments, members of parliaments, international and regional organizations, civil society and academia, to raise awareness of the urgent need to reduce the cost of violence against women.